

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

27 October 1962

Refer to: 1-20972/62

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. GEORGE BUNDY

SUBJECT: JCS Views on Nuclear Free or Missile Free Zones

I forward herewith the official views of the JCS on the question of nuclear free or missile free zones, and its importance in connection with the Brazilian Resolution and other de-nuclearization considerations at the present time.

Paul H. Nitze
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Enclosure
Memo for SecDef
in JCS w/attachment
dated 10/26/62

TRANSCRIBED PAGE FOLLOWS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Paul H. Nitze

JCEM-328-62

26 OCT 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Nuclear-Free or Missile-Free Zones (U)

1. The advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has been requested as to the military impact of taking the initiative in proposing "nuclear-free" or "missile-free" zones in Latin America and Africa. On the presumptions that this would be consistent with our declared objective of achieving the removal of the missile bases from Cuba, and might provide a formula to which the USSR would be more willing to agree.
2. As already expressed to you orally by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, it is the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that the United States should not propose or accept such discussion because:
 - a. Not only is the proposal itself undesirable, but, more important, the tendency to lose sight of the basic aim--the removal of the missiles--is not to the US advantage. There is no assurance that discussion, or even agreement, on "nuclear-free" zones in Latin America would promptly remove the missiles from Cuba. Unless they are promptly removed, the hazard to the United States grows daily greater.
 - b. The idea is militarily unsound because in its least objectionable form it degrades our military flexibility in our own back yard, while at the same time having no comparable effect on the Soviets.
 - c. There is every reason to believe the USSR would welcome such discussion because the USSR has essentially nothing to lose in such discussions.
3. The immediate issue here is the Brazilian proposal, or a US variant of that proposal. But the basic and important issue is whether the United States is going to lose control of this situation, lose the present initiative and momentum, and lose the advantage we now have.

4. The issue is now clear cut--the missiles should come out of Cuba. As soon as that sharp focus is blurred by other matters, as soon as the center of gravity begins to wander in discussion of all of Latin America or Africa, as soon as the Soviets can hide behind the endless arguments of often naive neutrals, then we have lost control and we may well have lost our objective.

5. The long term goal is to get rid of Castro. The immediate and urgent goal is to get rid of the missiles in Cuba. Already, in some quarters, there is growing concern over "world opinion" or "Allied support"; a concern that we must have approval of many other nations before we act in our own (and in our Allies') defense. The longer we talk, the more diffuse become the inevitable arguments, the weaker becomes whatever may be the final agreement. And when this happens, as it has in the past, we will have lent credence to the impression that we may be a strong country but we are a country unwilling to use its strength.

6. It is this, not any presumptively harmful world opinion, which is the real danger. If we allow ourselves to be trapped in inevitably endless arguments and end up with a dilute solution, it is then that we shall really have lost our friends, and lost the neutrals too.

7. The response to the President's bold pronouncement, which was not watered down by Allied apprehensions and reservations, was nearly complete unanimity of approval and support. We have the strategic advantage in our general war capabilities; we have the tactical advantages of moral rightness, of boldness, of strength, of initiative, and of control of this situation. This is no time to run scared.

8. It is basically for this reason that the Joint Chiefs of Staff urge that we not take up discussion of the Brazilian proposal or US variants of that proposal.

9. In order to achieve our immediate objective, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend that the United States discuss only the prompt removal of the missiles from Cuba, and that we discuss that only for a limited length of time. If the United States is forced to negotiate, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend as a US position that we agree to discussion of secondary issues such as "nuclear-free" zones, or comparable matters, only after resolution of the main issue by conclusive proof that the missiles have in fact been dismantled and removed as the President so clearly stated. It should be noted that, after the missiles have been removed, there is really

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nothing to negotiate except actual or potential US advantages in Latin America and Africa. The Soviets have nothing to lose in such negotiations.

10. Addressing specifically the Brazilian proposal, the Joint Chiefs of Staff oppose it; specific comments on that proposal are appended hereto.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

MAXWELL D. TAYLOR
Chairman
Joint Chiefs of Staff

Attachment